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SUBJECT: PKO FOR CHAD/C.A.R.: FRENCH WORST CASE SCENARIO

REF: A. PARIS 4513

[1](#)B. BRUSSELS 3346

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d  
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[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Romain Serman, AF Advisor at the French Presidency, said on November 19 that, if there are no further significant contributions to the French led-EU/UN peacekeeping operation for Chad and the C.A.R., two options could be presented to President Sarkozy for his decision: 1) that France will contribute additional troops to meet the 4,300 target (present contributions are about 2,800) or 2) that the operation will be conducted at a force level of 3,000, which Serman said was feasible but which would not allow for much flexibility at all. He said that France would continue to lobby EU partners but did not indicate how long it would do so before resorting to the two options he outlined. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Romain Serman, one of the staff advisors on AF matters at the French Presidency, met with U.S. Ambassador to Mauritania Mark Boulware on November 19. (Discussion of Mauritania and other issues will be reported separately.) Turning to Chad in discussing broader aspects of France's AF policy, and displaying a franker and more concerned attitude than the MFA official with whom we discussed this recently (ref A), Serman said that France had obtained commitments for about 2,800 forces for the EU/UN peacekeeping mission in Chad and the C.A.R., with France accounting for roughly half of the 2,800. He acknowledged that other commitments were slow in coming, and he said that medical support units and helicopters were the biggest shortcomings. Of the contributions made so far, most did not consist of combat troops, with France supplying the bulk of those. As have other French officials, Serman said that he wished this were not so, because the large number of French combat, as opposed to support, troops would increase the perception that this would be a "French" operation.

[1](#)3. (C) Serman said that the GOF was encouraged by the participation of neutral Ireland and Sweden, which were not often in the forefront concerning these kinds of operations, with Ireland contributing force commander LTG Nash. Serman noted the current target figure of 4,300, and he said that France would continue lobbying EU partners, emphasizing that this was an EU operation that the EU had decided to undertake and that its members should therefore be more willing to contribute troops.

[1](#)4. (C) That said, Serman said that the GOF was preparing for the possibility that there would be no further commitments. In such a case, Serman said that the French

were currently thinking of presenting two options to President Sarkozy. The first option would be for France to contribute the 1,500 or so additional troops needed to meet the 4,300 target. But this would mean that the force would be roughly 2/3 French, which would only exacerbate the perception problem. This option would also entail significant new costs for France.

15. (C) The other option would be to conduct the operation at the 3,000 level, with France and perhaps others making up the current difference. Serman said that the mission could be carried out with 3,000 troops but he said there would be very little flexibility to allow for generous troops rotations, downtime, or addressing unforeseen crises or other exigencies. Under this option, costs would be less than they would be for the larger mission.

16. (C) Serman said that the French would continue to lobby potential donors actively. He did not indicate how much time they would devote to this effort and at what point, should they not meet with success, they might have to shift to the other options he described. He gave the strong impression, however, that the French would like to initiate deployment by the end of 2007, as has been contemplated.

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